

# **Interculturality in the university education. A qualitative study.**

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## ***Abstract***

Intercultural training in the University is a necessity and a hope. A need, to the extent that must respond to the complex social and educational realities where the different cultural element is absolutely real and emerging. And, a hope, because while we educate for the respect and the promotion of intercultural we will be training teachers who will grow in future generations the seeds of peace and solidarity, and, therefore, much-needed positive values and fundamental for humanity. Therefore, in this work, we will present the results of the qualitative part of the process of research carried out in the context of the Faculty of Education Sciences of the University of Malaga during the years 2015, 2016 and 2017. The pedagogical practice of initial formation must ensure intercultural inclusion, through strategies of work that is involved to the cultural diversity present in the University classroom, in order to improve human interactions within the space training, and outside, to generate attitudes of cooperation and intercultural dialogue in university students, extending these attitudinal "ramifications" to society in general.

**Keywords:** Intercultural education, Culture of the diversity, Inclusion, University context.

## **1. Introduction**

The imaginary and mental representations about social reality, democratic values, human rights and intercultural education are fundamental in the future teachers. So much so, what if they aren't clearly defined, taken on board and implemented consistently, can have disastrous consequences for the school population and the general society. In the same way, the ethical component is key in the configuration of the pedagogical answer in the University context. It is necessary that students challenge the society in which we live, and critically analyze the situation of cultural diversity in times of uncertainty, political, social and cultural. Thus, they will have conceptual and procedural tools to act with democratic convictions and principles, to deal with any hint of discrimination, inequality, underestimation of diversity as an opportunity and wealth for the society and networked learning.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The University is a privileged space for intercultural training of future professionals of education (Soriano & Penalva, 2011), a stage where approaching theoretical models and practical, useful and effective strategies, to cultivate in the young students of the university degrees of education desire to meet and develop intercultural in their future teaching work (Lopez & Hinojosa, 2012; Sales, 2006). Interculturality should be a key element in the development of skills that help teachers coming to understand the relevance of cultural diversity as the core of their teaching practices. Thus, take into account cultural diversity in the University classroom is a learning opportunity, very valuable to meet the need for quality and effective response to situations of cultural and social diversity that exist in your professional future in their closest realities. Not saying, that intercultural education should leave their invisibility in the initial training to be a real tool of education inclusive, generating ethical debates about the meaning of education in today's society, at the same time as promoter of the serious and rigorous study of the culture of diversity, as a courageous choice in the educational climate of the University classroom settings.

It is important to create a pedagogical climate where it encourages sharing personal, intercultural experiences in a free and critical environment based on respect and the acceptance of cultural diversity in the University classroom. As well as generating discussions on ethics and the meaning of education in our days; at what point we are, where we are going and what are the resources necessary to build an intercultural education as fundamental pillar which facilitates the construction of the culture of diversity and present.

This pedagogical climate should favor through their lives and experiences, within the different spaces offered at the University level as a fundamental resource in the initial training, the recognition of the value and the richness that diversity brings human, and therefore, of the various cultural groups that constitute it, becoming an invaluable learning opportunity, to share in first person the idiosyncrasy of the reality surrounding students and the whole of the University community. Therefore have to enhance training in the University context plans covering different cultural approaches conveyed through the cross-cultural paradigm, this way are given the sociocultural changes given currently accommodate and reflected in the University as a mirror of our society, always in process of construction and constant renewal.

Essomba (2015) clarifies the need to articulate initial University education with the continuous, emphasizing training, since the University classroom to impart, for growth and personal and professional development of the future teachers, must try to equip them with knowledge so that they can design and carry out an intercultural curriculum. On the other hand, the continuous training of teachers with experience, should focus on the observation and understanding of cultural diversity through another Prism to the used to date, because it's not functional, or adapts to the demands of today's society.

### **3. Research Questions**

This article offers some of the scientific evidence and results of the educational Innovation Project financed by the Vice-Rector's office for Academic Management and faculty of the University of Málaga 2015-2017 (PIE15-31), called "Building Interculturality and diversity culture in the university context. "

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this project was to know the situation of intercultural training in the university space of the UMA. More precisely, in this work we try to respond in a synthetic way to the following more specific objectives:

- To identify the pedagogical conceptions of the university professors about the educational treatment of the interculturality in the initial formation.
- To understand the social and pedagogical potential of intercultural training on the university stage.
- Analyze emerging topics related to cultural diversity and interculturalism in the field of university education.

### **5. Research Methods**

We have used a qualitative cutting methodology in the educational Innovation project, developing in-depth interviews as well as the documentary review of educational projects, teaching guides and verification reports. In any case, in this paper we offer some data related to the in-depth interviews made to twenty-eight university professors of the Faculty of Education Sciences of the UMA. The data collection process was carried out during the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic courses.

Subsequently, we have proceeded to the analysis of content from a process of categorization based on thematic units and semantics linked to: intercultural Pedagogical conception, interculturalism in the university space, attitudes towards Cultural diversity, intercultural competencies, initial and ongoing training in interculturalism, emerging social and educational issues, and, finally, the university as an educational space for the construction of a culture of diversity. In any case, in this work we will only translate some results of certain thematic categories.

### **6. Findings**

#### **6.1. Pedagogical-Intercultural Conception**

There is a wide variety of opinions and pedagogical conceptions of interculturalism, running through different pedagogical currents, and sometimes based on the different personal experiences of the interviewed faculty. Then we highlight the case of Carlos who established the following definition of interculturality.

E. What is interculturality for you?

C. So...the Interculturality is a pedagogical proposal that aims to positively value cultural diversity and right now I think it is also a way of thinking, being and being in education where it is key, not only

respect and To take advantage of the cultural difference but also, to find spaces of encounter between the different students, between the different agents, no matter any context. (Interview with Carlos, 1).

We observe, in this definition of interculturalism, the predominance of an intercultural approach of inclusive and reflective cutting, where the interaction between different people and cultures is valued in order to generate spaces, occasions of mutual construction, where The culturales relationships are premium within a common project. It is a project of personal and social enrichment, in which all social values have to be shared, since the difference is interpreted as an optimal value that must be at the root of the different areas that shape the person. As Carlos points out, this is a way of thinking, of shaping, therefore, our being and being. In this same line we find the testimony of Carmen, who goes a little further and conceives the interculturality, not only as a paradigm that encompasses inclusive education, and remarks the configuration of this as a starting point for the development of the day to day , based on fundamental values and rights collected both in human rights and in the premises underpinning a democratic, solidarity and inclusive society.

Car. For me, interculturality goes beyond a paradigm, rather it is an attitude to life based on human rights and democratic values. With this I mean that it is often discussed whether inclusive education belongs to interculturality or within inclusive education is interculturality, I disagree. I believe that interculturality is above all in the sense that we are talking about shared values such as respect, empathy, tolerance and that goes beyond functional diversity, it is something inherent in human beings. (Interview with Carmen, 1)

## **6.2. Emerging social and educational issues linked to cultural diversity and interculturality**

The work on intercultural education is very imbricated to the historical social events of the period that we have to live, therefore, from our point of view, in order to confront the intercultural approach we consider that the subjects should be analyzed Emerging on a sociopolitical level, in order to present a global and up-to-date training. Broadly speaking, it is widely accepted that the premise of topical issues related to cultural diversity is to be addressed. We live in a global world where decisions taken at a particular point affect the whole planet, a clear example are the provisions implemented directly on the environment, invasions of peoples, and other measures that threaten freedom, Human rights and the care of our planet. The respective teachers are aware of this fact and say that from the initial university training have to address all these issues. Specifically, Maria, we are pointed out that in order to achieve that human civilization predominates it is necessary to raise awareness about the difficulties encountered, on numerous occasions by the will of the human being; And, to help people in a situation of difficulty, as an act of justice.

Ma. I think so, that we have to make a hole to talk about today because in this global world, we have no other to mingle, and moreover, there is an increasing inequality of this world and if we want to survive the Earth and human civilization , there is no choice, it is a matter of justice that, the truth to help those who are but go ahead. (Interview with Maria, 2).

Rosa on the other hand, shows us some experience carried out in the Faculty of Education Sciences, Malaga, through social networks. It is not only stated that it is necessary to confront the current topics from the university teaching practice, but can be done in various ways, and within these, it is alluded to the creation of virtual networks and communities. This favors the knowledge of the different realities at low cost, without the need of displacement and in a short period of time.

A. I believe that there are groups in the faculty and research projects that are working on educational innovation to try to create virtual communities, especially through networks from an intercultural approach, I think that there are Group and collective That are working and are attending to the importance of training for society and the country. (Interview with Rosa, 3).

### **6.3. Interculturality in the university space**

Throughout the interviews, one of the circumstances that stood out was that interculturality is not worked from the university in general and from the Faculty of Education Sciences of the UMA, in particular. Remember, Carlos ' comment, when he talked about the concept of interculturalism, he told us how only a single subject focused on this construct within its contents, but was attached only to the mention of inclusiveness, in the degree of Primary education.

E. is intercultural work in the university? How do you think it's done?

C. I think not, I think that the work of intercultural education in the university context is something that is still to be done, to grow and to build. I think it depends a lot on the people and the university professionals, because there are many teachers who can have a look, an intercultural approach, but others perhaps, because no, do not have it. I think that interculturality is working as an element of difference, of diversity in general, but I think it must have its own space, its own development within the university context. (Interview with Carlos, 1).

Carmen makes a reflection in which clearly, it shows us what from the university institution, Interculturality is not worked systematically and planned as the importance of the subject requires it, being relegated sometimes to the character of the University professors or their training, but does not make sure that it is carried out by not contemplating formally in the documents that govern the university academic life.

Car. You don't work all that you should, rather not. Because only transversally sometimes, depending on the character, the formation of university professors, as core subjects or that are within the specific competences, because it does not usually appear, then rather not, perhaps in the mention Of inclusiveness can appear and work in a subject, but in general lines do not work systematically within the university curriculum. (Interview with Carmen, 1)

This testimony is corroborated by Julio, who emphasizes that the formation in intercultural is scarce, although our students once graduate can exercise in other nations. That is, it is pointed to the existence of a feeling of pride in the type of qualification that the boys and girls acquire in the university, that it trains them to practise their profession in different contexts, but in its turn, it is recognized that it does not carry out a formation BA Sada in intercultural competitions, which favor a successful educational practice in the various sociocultural contexts.

. (...) Formally there is little, I think it fills our mouth that we train graduates who can work in other countries do not know what, I do not know how much, but there is little, that is the case, and more in the field of education, where teachers should be compulsory minimal training, although, be academic and if they also do a work of attitudes and more, much better, but at least a minimum training on what is intercultural education. What is then the terrain of the informal or not so formal and so much work, for example Erasmus, that is true the mere contact, the mere need to solve problems and such is decisive, there is some statistics in Erasmus that says what when asked , it gives the same origin and destiny, what they value of their experience there are three things that always say in the same order, the first one the experience in another country of different origin, in a different culture to his, the second is the enormous advance in the domain in the languages , because although they are six months or a year that is definitive, and, only

thirdly the university experience, discovering universities with different approaches, see different orientations of their same career, that seemed to be the objective of Erasmus and really is in Third place (...). (Interview with Julio, 1 & 2).

## **7. Conclusion**

Intercultural education in the university context, and especially in the faculties of Education Sciences, is a pedagogical element that we consider to be a priority. The challenge is to promote to the maximum in the university space the acquisition of cross-cutting competences, making of the university classrooms spaces of recognition of the diversity for the inclusion of all the sensitivities, the recognition and human respect. Humanizing University education means emphasizing the ethical and social meanings from a democratic paradigm of the culture of diversity. At crucial times and challenges such as the growing proliferation of populism and totalitarian ideologies, the growth of rejection of immigration and refugees, xenophobia and racism, future teachers need to be trained in skills, skills, knowledge, and, above all, in attitudes and values of democracy, humanity, respect and inclusion.

## **Acknowledgments [if any]**

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